

Infants at Work Program Working Well in BEDP

*By Mike Cameron, staff writer
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Two employees of the Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Prevention (BEDP) are taking advantage of the Infants at Work program to allow them to return to work and still spend extra time with their babies.

Kathleen Waters, BEDP disease coordinator, brings her son, Nathaniel, to work with her on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Whitney Evans, administrative assistant in the Immunization Program brings her daughter, Makayla, with her on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Kathleen and Whitney welcome the chance to spend the extra time with their babies. "I have found that being able to bring Nathaniel to work with me three days a week reduced the separation anxiety that comes with returning to work. I love the program and hope other parents will take advantage of it." Kathleen said.

Whitney agreed. "I think it's beneficial to the babies also. Everyone in BEDP has been very helpful. Being able to bond with Makayla at work is very special, even if it is just on two days," she added.

Both mothers had concerns that their babies' crying would disturb their coworkers. Martha Siemsen, assistant director of the Immunization Program, works in the office by Whitney's cubicle. According to Martha, "For me, the sound of a crying, healthy baby is a positive reminder of just how important our efforts are to encourage parents to immunize their children – not to mention the fact that just having a baby around is very uplifting to everyone's spirits."



Candace Taylor is one of Nathaniel's two designated alternate care providers. "I think the office is actually quieter when the babies are here," she said. "Everyone tries to avoid waking them when they are napping."

BEDP Director Sharon Patnode readily approved the requests from the two mothers to take advantage of the program. "I think it's a win-win situation for the bureau and the entire agency. We

Kathleen Waters, BEDP, and Nathaniel focus on customer service during their Infants at Work shift.



Whitney Evans, Immunization, and Makayla review paperwork together as part of KDHE's Infants at Work program.

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have employees who are able return to work sooner, and the babies really have had a positive effect on the environment in the bureau," she said.

KDHE full-time employees who are new mothers, fathers or legal guardians are eligible to participate in the program whether custody of the infant came through birth, adoption or legal guardianship. Infants of employees are eligible for the program for 45-120 days after birth or adoption.

Parents participating in the program designate two alternate care providers who voluntarily agree to care for the infant should the parent be unable care for the infant while attending a meeting or other work activity that requires the parent to be away from the infant for a short time.

More information on the Infant at Work Program is available on the intranet at:
http://intranet/hr/Policies/secretarys_policies.html.